

## **Glen Alton Project Ribbon-Cutting**

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**August 12, 2010**

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I am pleased to return to Glen Alton this morning to mark the completion of the restoration efforts at this historic site. The location is now well on its way to becoming a premier destination for visitors to the Jefferson National Forest seeking an ideal outdoor experience.

I began working with Giles County officials and the U.S. Forest Service more than five years ago to develop a way the Glen Alton area could realize its full potential as a tourist destination. The property was purchased by the U.S. Forest Service in 1999 and afforded natural and historical assets including Stony Creek, ponds and wetlands, open fields, gardens, orchards, vineyards, and two historic structures as well as barns and outbuildings.

After a master plan for the site was developed with the input of local residents, Giles County officials and state agencies, Congress approved my request for \$800,000 to undertake the restoration plan.

And today, after many months of effort by local and state partners and the U.S. Forest Service, the lodge and caretaker's home built in the early 20th century have been restored, the banks of Stony Creek, which runs through the property, have been stabilized to provide enhanced fishing opportunities, and the 1-mile birding trail is now complete.

With the renovation work completed, the area will now become a destination for visitors

and residents. It is an ideal setting for birding enthusiasts, wildlife biologists, and those interested in the history of our region's settlers. The area is also ideal for hosting educational activities relating to history, science and conservation.

As part of the restoration project, extensive renovation has been completed on both the lodge and caretaker's house. New plumbing has been installed, interior water damage has been repaired, the porches have been refurbished, new windows have been purchased, the floors have been refurbished or replaced, and central heating has been installed. Water damaged siding on the outside of the building has also been replaced.

In addition, the structures have been stabilized with new support beams and rebuilt foundations. All of the work has been completed carefully to preserve the historic architecture and character of the buildings.

Two years ago, many of us gathered here today marked the completion of Glen Alton's 1 mile birding trail. Since that time, on the grounds of Glen Alton, the grape arbors have been rebuilt, the apple orchards have been pruned and native wildflowers and trees have been planted. An heirloom garden will be added, and the Forest Services is seeking volunteers to help plant and maintain the garden.

Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service has partnered with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Trout Unlimited to restore the banks of Stony Creek and dredge the ponds. Trout Unlimited has planted 200 trees along the Creek to restore the riparian habitat. The completion of this work makes Glen Alton an excellent fishing location and will draw many more fishing enthusiasts to the area.

The significant federal investment in the restoration of Glen Alton has become a catalyst for local efforts to enhance the tourism economies of Giles County and the surrounding areas. Giles County, Craig County and Monroe County, West Virginia have formed a partnership to create the Whistle Stop Scenic Byway, which both Virginia and West Virginia have designated as a State Scenic Byway. The trail extends 35 miles through these Counties and provides an opportunity for local business owners to benefit from the visitors to this region that destinations like Glen Alton provide.

Our region is only beginning to realize its full potential as a tourist destination. Glen Alton will soon become another major asset to our region attracting visitors who are seeking a premier outdoor experience or educational opportunities.

I would like to take a moment to recognize several individuals whose efforts have been instrumental in achieving the success we celebrate today.

I would like to thank Maureen Hyzer, Forest Supervisor, and Cindy Schiffer, District Ranger, and the excellent staff of the Forest Service for their diligent work on this restoration.

I also want to thank the Giles County Board of Supervisors for their leadership and foresight in investing in the County's tourism economy. Giles County possesses some of the best outdoor experiences in the state, and the Board of Supervisors is working to ensure local business owners and entrepreneurs benefit from the increased visitation to the County.

The members of the Giles County School Board, the Giles County Historical Society and the Giles County Chamber of Commerce also deserve our appreciation for their work at Glen Alton.

I also want to thank David Clark and John Jones with the Virginia Department of Transportation for their work toward this project, Lynn Crump with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and Randy Rose with the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

Several private organizations contributed to the success of this event and also deserve our thanks. I would like to recognize Buzz Scanland with Mountain Lake Hotel and Conservancy; Jewel Radford with the Giles County Wildlife Club; Richard Kelly with New River Valley Master Naturalists; Daniel Cooke with Cub Scout Pack #460 and Darrell Adams with Boy Scout Troup #34; Todd Lowe, President of Trout Unlimited's New River Valley Chapter; M.K Sizemore and Tim Ivey with the Appalachian Gateway Initiative for Natural and Cultural Heritage Tourism; and Laura Belleville with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

Finally, I also want to thank Laura Lee, my Deputy Chief of Staff, for her outstanding

efforts on behalf of the Glen Alton project.

The restoration of Glen Alton is truly an example of what can be accomplished when citizens, private organizations and government officials on the local, state and federal levels work together in aid of a common purpose. For that cooperation and successful work, I want to thank all here and offer special congratulations to the visitors who will enjoy a newly restored Glen Alton.